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DEMOCRACY IN THE UNIVERSITIES

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The history of universities shows these two strongly marked tendencies, on the one hand that of self-concentration, of exclusiveness, and on the other hand that of missionary enterprise. We have seen the first of these tendencies expressed in the adoption of a peculiar student dress, in the consequent feuds between "town and gown," and in a thousand ways both more and less significant. The second tendency has shown itself in the preaching of the Lollards and of the German reformers, of the Methodists, too, who went forth from Oxford on their errand of good will, and in more recent movements of great interest and importance. We must not forget, moreover, that the influence of university culture working downward — as good influences do — has made possible the modern system of elementary schools. Both tendencies were strongly marked in the founding of the early American colleges. These colleges were established for the promotion of sound learning and for the training of godly ministers, with special thought for the christianizing of the natives. The exclusive tendency promotes scholarship and narrowness; the missionary tendency too often associates benevolence with shallowness. A fine balancing of the two has long seemed the sure and only way of developing a perfect university spirit. Let a sovereign consolidate the powers of government in his own grasp and then exercise that power faithfully for the good of his subjects, and there — it was similarly argued in political discussion — we have a perfect state. But the political life of modern states will not be hemmed in by aristocratic theories. The fact of a great upward striving on the part of the people has compelled men to enlarge their theories of the state. And even the universities feel the democratic forces moving upon the social and political life of the time. The harmonizing of the two opposing tendencies in university life is not enough. Another problem has presented itself and must be solved. There has arisen a strong demand of the people upon the great institutions of learning that higher education itself shall become more generally accessible.

The standard of the true democracy is character. The true democratic spirit would rate a man according to what he is — wise or foolish, good or bad. Democracy has made its way pretty generally against royalty, and all aristocracy of birth. It has joined battle fairly with the aristocracy of wealth and made some headway in the struggle. Now, the impression has come abroad that there is another enemy of democracy, having its stronghold in the universities, namely, the aristocracy of learning. More learning does not answer the democratic standard; for it has been found that learned men are not always wise, and men unskilled in the learning of the schools have often

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shown themselves both wise and good. Democracy must then join issue with the aristocracy of learning; with the *aristocracy of learning*, not with learning itself. For learning is a thing greatly to be desired as a strong prop of goodness and wisdom. Democracy seeks to combat the aristocracy of learning by making learning itself democratic. Hence arises this demand of the people upon the great institutions of learning, a demand scarcely formulated, it may be, and little understood, but none the less a clear and earnest demand — that learning be made in the largest possible measure accessible. It is not missionary activity of the universities which the present case requires. The people already enjoy the fruits of university missionary zeal in their fine systems of elementary instruction, not to mention other benefits. It is not condescension and a gift that is now awaited, but participation on equal terms. Truth is an inestimable blessing to the whole human race and is not a fit article for monopoly.

The question has become a practical one. How can higher education, without compromising its own proper standards, freely join hands with the people?

Now, it must be acknowledged that the universities have made noble advances in the way of rendering their advantages accessible. Their influence has been exerted in the promotion of secondary education, and now a large proportion of those who go to the universities may prepare for the entrance examinations in an efficient academy or high school, without going far from home. Provision has been made, moreover, by scholarships and otherwise, for aid, on a large scale to poor boys in college. One of the foremost of our American universities is able to say confidently that no young man of good natural ability need be deterred from undertaking its course of study for lack of funds. We cannot praise too highly the large provision that has been made for opening college doors to the children of even the very poor. It is a practical benevolence and usually so administered as to imply no inferiority on the part of its beneficiaries.

But this enterprise centers within the college walls. It draws the young people from their homes to the college. The plan is the same as that adopted for the improvement of the Indians. Promising young members of the various tribes are isolated from their natural surroundings in great schools in the far east. Here they are instructed in the arts and sciences of civilization; and after completing their term of residence at the school, they return to their respective tribes with better equipment and larger outlook, where they will be natural centers of elevating influence. It reminds one of the plan of strong, far-seeing governments, which select young men and train them for the military or civil service. Is this plan a good one? Emphatically, *yes*. To be superseded? There appears to be no reason why. Is it sufficient? No; if the universities are to become wholly democratic, they must come still nearer to the people — their activity must extend far and wide beyond the campus grounds.

What are the advantages of residence at the university? Those advantages are incalculably great. In the first place there is the advantage of association with men of ripe scholarship and high character, the members of the university faculty. Then there is the advantage of thorough instruction under those who are specially skilled to teach. There is the opportunity of

using great libraries, museums of natural science and art collections. There is training in many of the little things, conventionalities if you please, which give ease and confidence in the use of one's acquirements. Finally, there is the association with a large student body, the indefinable atmosphere of high thought and noble pursuits, and incidentally things innumerable which gather about a seat of learning.

Much of all this can never be projected from the university town out into distant communities. Much of it can. And some things which require time for their development may in time be made to extend the gracious influence of their presence more widely than at first seems possible. But before we inquire further as to definite and practical schemes, let us look on the other side and see what are the conditions of the case on the part of the people. Leaving out of the count on the one hand those comparatively few who have never learned in the common schools or elsewhere to read and write, the wholly illiterate, and on the other hand the small number of college and university graduates, the great body of our people have acquired the first elements of learning, many of them have acquired a good education in grammar and high schools, and a very large proportion of them read regularly the newspapers and other literature. Many of them are satisfied with their intellectual acquirements. Others have the true scholar's instinct which prompts them to pursue knowledge unceasingly and never rest satisfied so long as there is truth to which they have not attained. Then there are thousands who are discouraged with obstacles or who perhaps are only half awakened, whom a little timely encouragement would call out into a new intellectual life. Two strongly marked instances may be cited as in a measure typical. "The first American" came up from surroundings dark with ignorance, and his schooling was only sufficient to take him out of the illiterate class. But the love of learning was deeply grounded in his nature. He learned wherever opportunity presented. He read all the books within his reach. He listened eagerly to those wiser than himself. He thought on all he read and heard. He followed up small clues to learning beyond the sphere of his acquaintance. His mastery of Euclid by himself is one of the glories of his life history. Lincoln became a learned man, and he may well stand as a type of those who are ready to use to splendid advantage every opportunity of contact with great men or with their thoughts in books. He stands, moreover, as a proof in person that the essential condition of scholarship is to be found in the man and not in his surroundings.

As a second type we may take Michael Faraday, the "greatest discovery" of Sir Humphrey Davy. Faraday was a young bookbinder with a boyish interest in electricity. He heard Davy lecture on chemistry, and thereafter he could not rest. He wrote out his notes on the lectures he had heard and sent them to Davy. This was the beginning of a lasting friendship between the two men, and led the young bookbinder out into a brilliant and eminently useful scientific career.

The first thing that the universities have to do in coming near to the people is to find out those who are eager to learn and awaken those whose interest in learning is still dormant. The surest way of doing this is through public lectures. Printer's ink will not accomplish this end. There must be the living presence of a thinking, feeling, speaking *man*. The university

must embody itself in able traveling teachers and come face to face with the people. This part of the effort must be made popular and attractive — holding out no delusive allurements, to be sure, but not emphasizing either the roughnesses of the path of learning.

Then there should be regular classes formed for the sake of definiteness and close supervision. Even after the preliminary effort to popularize the undertaking, the better part of the instruction must be conducted by word of mouth.

Finally, provision must be made for expression on the part of the learner of what he has learned. Learning is rarely — perhaps never — perfect without expression. More specifically, there must be opportunity given for the learners to question the teacher; opportunity for them to present summaries of what has been learned, as did Michael Faraday, for the inspection and correction of the teacher; and provision must be made for some test of progress and for the issuing of certificates to those who have done specified work.

It would be well for us, before attempting to elaborate any plans of procedure, to ask what has already been done in this direction. Something has been done in this country, a great deal in England. Efforts toward the wide diffusion of learning, apart from the common schools and beyond their proper field, have been made repeatedly. Such efforts have been made especially by religious societies, for the dissemination of both religious and secular information, and by benevolent organizations in the great cities. Correspondence has been extensively, and it would seem, successfully employed. The unique movement embodied in the Chautauqua University has accomplished untold good. Its methods have included home reading on prescribed courses, the circulation of a periodical devoted to the elucidation of the courses prescribed, local circles for mutual encouragement and assistance, a great annual meeting in the summer at an attractive resort, where lectures are given and a variety of highly stimulating exercises held; and finally the giving of diplomas for the completion of definitely assigned curricula. Evening classes are provided in the great cities by various benevolent institutions and these have been attended by great numbers of eager and regular students. The Young Men's Christian Association of Boston, to cite a single illustration, reported not long ago an enrollment in its evening classes larger than the whole student body of Harvard University at the same time.

We should not forget to mention the "lyceum" system which flourished some years ago in many cities — the golden age of the lecture platform.

Much may be learned from these movements as to the proper conduct of the work now apparently devolving on the universities. But the university work must have certain strongly marked characteristics of its own. It must be to a large degree well rounded and complete in the courses of study it offers. It must emphasize the personal element in the sending out of thoroughly equipped, clear-thinking, skilled instructors. By establishing a direct relation between the university and the people, it is able to bring many incidental advantages in its train, which will surely develop with time and experience.

Now, while the chief efforts made in the past toward extending the privileges of higher education to those who could not go to college, were made by be-

nevolent and religious organizations, the actual beginning of university efforts in the same direction was prompted by interest in the higher education of women. We are told that Professor Stuart of the University of Cambridge was invited by a number of ladies, in 1867, to deliver a lecture before them on a specified subject. Professor Stuart had no faith in the touch-and-go of single, disconnected lectures, but he agreed to give instead a course of eight lectures, which would afford an opportunity of developing his subject with some degree of completeness. This course of lectures, before an audience composed exclusively of women, is regarded as in some sense the beginning of the movement which now goes by the name of university extension.

Three years later Professor Stuart discovered almost by accident, the value of a regular "class" conducted in connection with a lecture course, affording those who hear the lectures a chance to meet the lecturer personally, ask questions, and "clinch" the impressions received from the more formal presentation of the subject.

These early efforts of Professor Stuart seem not to have received official recognition and cooperation at the hands of the university authorities. Cambridge made a small beginning in the same general direction when it provided for a system of examinations for the special benefit of students taught by private tutors or studying by themselves. Finally, in 1873, Cambridge entered upon the work of university extension in earnest. In 1878 the University of Oxford joined in the movement. So successful has the effort been that in 1890 Cambridge counted 11,500 extension students and Oxford 18,000. A summer meeting of these students is held at Oxford. In the summer of 1890 that ancient seat of learning gathered within its classic precincts its new order of scholars to the number of 1,200, from the shops, factories, mines, offices, and not least of all from the ranks of elementary school teachers, all over England. There is something peculiarly fascinating in the picture of this new alliance between a seat of liberal arts on the one hand and the sturdy cultivators of the practical arts on the other. Cambridge holds a summer school for work of a more strictly scientific character and shows accordingly a much smaller attendance. In London the extension work is prosecuted very successfully under the management of a society organized for the purpose, drawing its teaching force from several different institutions.

It is desirable that the methods employed in England be understood by those who would undertake a like movement in this country; for they are the result of careful experiment and study, and while English methods may require modification to adapt them to American conditions, time and strength will be saved here as in every art and science by taking what has been already accomplished as a point of departure for the new undertaking. Briefly stated, the extension methods employed in England include, first, what may be called the university center, either a society drawing instructors from different universities and other institutions, as in London, or a special organization in the university itself for extension purposes; secondly, the "local centers"—committees or societies formed in the towns and districts interested, which make all necessary local arrangements for the lecture courses; thirdly, the instructor, in whose person the university projects itself out to

the local centers. For the rest, the methods are those of the instructor. In the first place, he prepares a "syllabus" of the course he is to give, embodying a full outline of the lectures, together with book references and suggestions for home study. The lectures are given weekly in connected courses sometimes of six, sometimes and preferably 12, on the same subject. Where local libraries are inadequate, lecturers take with them a choice selection of books relating to the subject under consideration. The instructor, in addition to lecturing, conducts a "class," usually before or after the lecture, at which there is a free interchange of question and answer on the subject more formally treated from the platform. One other and that a very important feature of the instructor's service consists in the correction of abstracts of the lectures, or papers on various phases of the same subject prepared weekly by those members of the "class" who wish to pursue the study thoroughly and receive regular certificates for the completion of the prescribed course. Finally, an examination is given at the close of the course of lectures, and on the basis of weekly reports and examination combined certificates are issued to those whose work warrants such recognition; and students who have completed a prescribed number of related and consecutive courses are credited with the completion of the first year's work in the regular curriculum of the university.

Such are the bare outlines of the English system. The system has had now one fair trial in this country; and last year's work of the Philadelphia Society for the Extension of University Teaching has undoubtedly marked out the way for much good work of this kind in the near future. The transformation of this Philadelphia society into an American society assures an agitation in favor of such teaching through the length and breadth of the land. Just now the interest of the friends of this movement throughout the country centers in the action of the state of New York. The conditions here seem specially favorable to efforts for popularizing higher education. The University of the State of New York is not bounded by walls of brick and mortar. It extends to all sections and embraces all institutions of higher instruction in the state. Means are already placed at disposal of the University regents by the state legislature, expressly for extension purposes. Elsewhere the extension seems like a mere popular appendage of the university, the real work of which remains exactly where and what it was. The full integration of the extension with the university, which shall make the teaching of the adult population in their homes as essential a function of a great institution of learning as the instruction of that favored class of young men and women gathered within its walls — the real grafting of the extension into the university, making it an essential part of the complete organism, is still a dream entertained by the more sanguine promoters of the extension movement. The University of New York is prepared beforehand, as is no other university in America or England, to work out the realization of that dream. Here are special facilities for enlisting the co-operation of every institution of higher education in the state. The force that can be brought to bear at once in the furtherance of the movement is unparalleled in the states of the Union.

One other condition is especially favorable and merits careful consideration. One great problem of the extension movement, is that of a suitable

local nucleus for the undertaking. It seems to be a settled principle that the new movement should join hands with local organizations already existing and provided with regular places of meeting. Working men's clubs, Young Men's Christian associations, library associations and similar societies have afforded fit ground on which the university could meet the people. Wherever there is an institution seeking to enlighten the public for any purpose whatever, there is a place where the light of university instruction, which is supposed to shine for the mere sake of illumination, is assured of welcome. Doubtless the University of the State of New York may profitably follow the example of the earlier efforts in this respect. The peculiar advantage here lies in the connection of the secondary schools as well as of the colleges, with the university. All over the state there are high schools and academies, representing a large money investment. Already discussion has arisen as to the possibility of securing to the communities a larger return on that investment. The class and assembly rooms of these schools, their reference libraries, collections and apparatus, it has been argued, might in many instances be made available, at least in the evening, for the instruction of many who are debarred from attendance upon the sessions of the school. The question naturally suggests itself whether in many places the public high school may not afford a point of vantage in this new undertaking; and the further question whether instruction of the high school grade may not sometimes prove a valuable auxiliary to the lecture courses provided by the higher schools.

It was a broad conception of higher education which directed the organization of this unique university. Let once so strong a warp of noble institutions be filled in with a woof of popular instruction and the result will be a more splendid educational fabric than has yet been seen. Many practical difficulties will undoubtedly be met which only experience can point out and only the wisdom drawn from experience can overcome. The colleges will need to maintain steadily their high standards of scholarships; but without lowering those standards a way seems open to make higher education more accessible to the adult population of the whole state, and the whole United States, and the democratic movement has already taken strong hold of the great centers of that higher education.

University of the State of New York

Incorporated May 1, 1784; reorganized April 13, 1787; powers enlarged and laws revised and consolidated June 15, 1889.

The University consists of all (at present 410) incorporated institutions of academic and higher education, with the State Library, State Museum, and such other libraries, museums or other institutions for higher education in this state as may be admitted by the regents to the University.

Its object is, in all proper ways, to encourage and promote academic and higher education.

The powers of the University are vested in 23 regents, including the Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, Secretary of State, and Superintendent of Public Instruction, *ex officio*. Regents are elected in the same manner as senators of the United States, and serve without salary.

The regents have power to incorporate, and to alter or repeal the charters of colleges. academies, libraries, museums, or other educational institutions belonging to the University; to distribute to them all funds granted by the state for their use; to inspect their workings and require annual reports under oath of their presiding officers; to establish examinations as to attainments in learning, and confer on successful candidates suitable certificates, diplomas and degrees, and to confer honorary degrees.

They apportion annually an academic fund of $106,000, a part for buying books and apparatus for academies and high schools raising an equal amount for the same purpose, and the balance, on the basis of attendance and of the regents' examinations.

The work of the University is divided into five departments:

1 **Executive** — including incorporations, supervision, inspection, reports, finances and all other work not assigned to another department.

2 **Examinations** — including preliminary, law student, medical student, academic, higher, law, medical and any other examinations conducted by the regents.

3 **Extension** — including the work of extending more widely opportunities and facilities for education to adults and others unable to attend the ordinary institutions of higher education.

4 **State Library** — including duplicate department, library school and all other library interests intrusted to the regents.

5 **State Museum** — including the work of state geologist, paleontologist, economic geologist, botanist, entomologist, and zoologist, together with any other scientific interests of the University.